

# THE RAINBOW INITIATIVE

*A Toolkit for  
Congregations*



*episcopal*  
MIGRATION MINISTRIES

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# WELCOME

Dear friends,

In the summer of 2022, The Episcopal Church passed [General Convention Resolution D045](#): “On Supporting LGBTQ+ Refugees and Asylum Seekers.” The resolution called on the Church to focus attention on “persons forced to seek refugee or asylee status because they fear being persecuted based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and/or sex characteristics” through advocacy and also asked Episcopal Migration Ministries to “highlight the issues surrounding LGBTQI+ refugees and asylees and offer information on ways of support, including ... for example, in their Toolkit for Congregations.” Honoring that request, we are offering this resource, The Rainbow Initiative Toolkit for Congregations, to Episcopal congregations and the broader community of individuals and organizations that work with and for people who have been forced from their home countries in search of safety.

The statement The Episcopal Church made with resolution D045 is important and timely. In 2023 and continuing into 2024, it is illegal to be LGBTQ+ in about 70 countries, and 11 of those prescribe the death penalty. In many more countries, attacks against and murder of LGBTQ+ people go unprosecuted. Religion is used to justify much of the persecution that LGBTQ+ people face worldwide, including in countries in which member churches of the Anglican Communion are present. Here at home, various U.S. state governments are passing anti-LGBTQ+ legislation, causing members of the LGBTQ+ community to consider and take steps to move to different parts of the country so they can live safely and access the medical care they need and deserve.

As the migration ministry of The Episcopal Church and a refugee resettlement agency since 1988, EMM serves newly arriving refugees and other forcibly displaced persons, and the local organizations and churches that welcome and support them. Some individuals who arrived in the country as refugees, and those who come to the country seeking protection through the asylum process, have fled persecution because of their LGBTQ+ identity. EMM's responsibility to support and welcome this population is twofold: 1) As a refugee resettlement agency, we equip our resettlement partners to provide culturally appropriate services and orientation to all newcomers, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. 2) As a ministry of the church, we are called to provide education, worship and prayer resources, and opportunities for service in migration ministry to all congregations. Through the Rainbow Initiative and this toolkit, we aim specifically to increase awareness, understanding, sensitivity, and ability to take action to advocate for, welcome, and support LGBTQ+ forced migrants.

This toolkit is merely a starting place for personal and congregational learning, prayer, witness, and service. We hope you find the materials meaningful, and that they inspire you and others to take additional steps. Please feel free to contact us at any time with questions, and to discuss opportunities for welcome and sponsorship of LGBTQ+ forced migrants and other newcomers. We look forward to working with you.

Faithfully,



Sarah Shipman  
Director, Episcopal Migration Ministries

# ABOUT THE RAINBOW INITIATIVE

The Rainbow Initiative was created in response to 2022 General Convention Resolution D045, which resolved that The Episcopal Church should focus attention on “persons forced to seek refugee or asylee status because they fear being persecuted based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and/or sex characteristics.” The resolution includes a “request that Episcopal Migration Ministries highlight the issues surrounding LGBTQI+ refugees and asylees and offer information on ways of support...” and refers to advocacy directed towards intergovernmental organizations and the United States government.

In accordance with its mission, EMM’s plan for the Rainbow Initiative focused primarily on working with Episcopal congregations and other organizations at the grassroots level. Major elements of the plan included building a national network of relevant groups to focus on LGBTQ+ forced migrants; developing and providing educational and worship resources to those groups and their members; raising awareness of LGBTQ+ forced migration within The Episcopal Church and more broadly; and encouraging activity centered on June 2023, including Pride Month and World Refugee Day (June 20th) events.

For updates about the Rainbow Initiative as it moves into and beyond 2024, visit [www.episcopalmigrationministries.org/rainbowinitiative](http://www.episcopalmigrationministries.org/rainbowinitiative).

**LEARN**

# LEARN

These resources provide information about LGBTQ+ forced migrants and migration.

- Webinar recording: [An Introduction to LGBTQ+ forced migrants](#)

- Training Tool for Local Use
  - [PPT Slides](#)
  - [Script](#)

- [On demand video](#): Jesus Didn't Turn Anybody Away, Neither Do We: Churches Welcoming LGBTQ Forced Migrants: a webinar presentation for the Center for Migration Studies, Adam Mickiewicz University on October 19, 2023

- Rainbow Initiative flyer: This resource (pages 6-7) was designed to be distributed at Pride and World Refugee Day events.

- Rainbow Initiative downloads/design files:
  - [PDF](#)
  - [Print-ready PDF with crop marks & bleed](#)
  - [Canva template design file \(duplicate to edit\)](#)

- Rainbow Initiative [2023 Retrospective Report](#)



# THE RAINBOW INITIATIVE



The Rainbow Initiative is a program of Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), the refugee resettlement and migration ministry of The Episcopal Church. It was created in 2023 in response to a decision of the Church in the summer of 2022 (General Convention Resolution D045) to focus attention on people who have been forced to leave their countries of origin because of persecution based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The Initiative is working with congregations and communities throughout the United States and Europe to draw attention to LGBTQ+ forced migrants in Pride Events and beyond. Current partners are found here: [episcopalmigrationministries.org/rainbow-initiative-communities/](https://episcopalmigrationministries.org/rainbow-initiative-communities/)

## Welcome LGBTQ+ Asylum Seekers

### About LGBTQ+ Forced Migrants

A “forced migrant” is someone who is compelled to leave their country of citizenship or origin because of persecution. They may be designated as “refugees,” “asylum seekers,” “asylees,” “undocumented immigrants,” or with some other terminology, depending on how they relate to the immigration system of the country where they are located.

It is illegal to be LGBTQ+ in about 70 countries, and 11 now prescribe the death penalty. In many more countries, attacks and murder against LGBTQ+ people go unprosecuted.

Religion is used to justify much of the persecution that LGBTQ+ people face worldwide. At the same time, many LGBTQ+ people who have been persecuted remain religious themselves, and much of the help that they receive is motivated by religion.

If and when they reach the U.S., LGBTQ+ forced migrants are more likely to be asylum seekers (about 30,000 per year) or undocumented immigrants, than they are to be refugees (about 1,000 per year). These legal differences are important because asylum seekers are unable to work legally for at least 180 days after they have filed their asylum application, and they are ineligible for many government-funded benefit programs. Undocumented immigrants also face these challenges. Individuals admitted to the U.S. as refugees, on the other hand, arrive with immediate work authorization, access to various public assistance programs, and a pathway to citizenship.

Many LGBTQ+ people are alienated from the social support systems that most forced migrants depend on in order to survive, such as their families and ethnic community associations. This social isolation, coupled with the lack of work authorization, makes them particularly vulnerable to homelessness, extreme poverty, and exploitation.

# THE RAINBOW INITIATIVE



Nevertheless, LGBTQ+ forced migrants are often strong, determined, and hopeful: Successfully fleeing from persecution requires enormous strength and determination. They bring their talents and energy to their new communities. And throughout their journeys towards safety, they are driven by hope for a better future.

“Internally displaced people” have fled persecution but remained within their country of citizenship. Many LGBTQ+ Americans can relate to this experience, and have relied on Episcopal and other congregations to provide them with a warm welcome in their new communities. This same welcome is extremely important for people who have had to cross international borders in order to reach safety.

## **Why Should Christians Care?**

The call to “welcome the stranger” through protection and hospitality is deeply rooted in many religions, including Christianity. Christian scripture and tradition emphasize seeing Jesus in all people, and particularly in those who are persecuted and in need of help.

Religion is interwoven with the persecution many LGBTQ+ people experience. It can also be interwoven with their welcome and healing.

## **What Can You Do?**

- Join the Rainbow Initiative: Individuals and organizations are invited to learn more about the project and download resources for local use at [www.episcopalmigrationministries.org/rainbowinitiative](http://www.episcopalmigrationministries.org/rainbowinitiative).
- Welcome and sponsor: Learn more about ways that you and your community can come together to sponsor a refugee, asylum seeker, or other displaced person through EMM’s Ways to Welcome: <https://episcopalmigrationministries.org/waystowelcome/>
- Advocate: Use your voice to advocate for those forced to flee their homelands in search of safety. Join the Episcopal Public Policy Network to respond to action alerts and share your thoughts with your members of Congress and the administration: [www.episcopalchurch.org/ogr](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/ogr)
- Give: Show your support for our newest neighbors and make a gift to Episcopal Migration Ministries. Every gift ensures newcomers welcomed through EMM are given a solid foundation to begin again in safety and hope. [www.episcopalmigrationministries.org/give](http://www.episcopalmigrationministries.org/give)



**PRAY**

**Collects & Prayers**

# WORSHIP RESOURCES

## COLLECT

Composed by The Benedictine Way, Omaha, Nebraska

O God, you call us to welcome all your children with equal care: empower us with your Spirit, that we may courageously and sacrificially open our hearts to those seeking a home with us; always give us passion to incarnate justice and blessing for people of every stripe, in particular our LGBTQ siblings who are in grave danger in their native lands. Help us to enfold them in the same loving embrace in which you enfold us and all your creation; through the great savior whose arms stretch to include all, Jesus the Christ.

Amen.

# WORSHIP RESOURCES

## COLLECTS

Holy Creator, you shower your perfect love upon all your lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer children, regardless of where they are from or what their immigration status might be: Grant that we might mirror your love in our own lives and thereby participate in the realization of your kingdom on earth; through the aid of our Savior Jesus Christ, who abides in a heavenly embrace with you and the Holy Spirit now and forever. *Amen.*

God of all tenderness, who saw your only Son persecuted and tortured: Help us to see the face of your Son in those who are attacked because of their sexual orientation or gender identity by people who misunderstand and misuse religion or political power, so that we might give witness to your true religion of love; we ask this in the name of your Son, who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. *Amen.*

God of all extravagant gifts, whose creation provides enough for all to flourish: Grant that we might see the blessings that are brought to us by people who have moved to this community, including those who are escaping persecution based on sexual orientation or gender identity, so that we might grow and flourish together; through Jesus Christ our Savior, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. *Amen.*

# WORSHIP RESOURCES

## PRAYER

God, Bless Those Who Are Afraid  
Louie Crew Clay, 1984

God, bless those who are afraid –  
Not just those who fear  
the thunder over the mountains,  
the clockwork mouse,  
the creditor's knock,  
the runaway tiger,  
the criminal at large,  
bombs,  
a crashed car,  
cancer,  
an empty stomach,  
a child's danger,  
a lover's death.  
But also those who fear  
a stranger's smile  
the mob's chants,  
the voice of desire echoing through a dream, the profanation of a trust,  
an impulse to love followed by hate,  
your voice thundering through the garden: "Where are you?"  
No voice at all.  
God, bless those who are afraid.

# WORSHIP RESOURCES

## Prayers of the People

### Adapted from the Prayers of the People in The Book of Common Prayer

#### *Additions to Form I*

*Add one or more of the following:*

For the courage, safety, and healing of those who are attacked in this and every country because of their true gender as it has been revealed to them, let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

For the courage, safety, and healing of those who are attacked in this and every country because of who they love, let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

For the family members and loved ones of those who are attacked because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, that they also may be comforted and strengthened in their resolve for justice, let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

For strength and comfort among children who suffer prejudice from their parents, let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

For the wisdom to discern whether we are called to reach out to LGBTQ+ people who are searching for safety, and the strength to follow your call, let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

For the open-heartedness, confidence, and humility that we must have if we are to welcome newcomers as you are calling us to do, let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

For the ability to see that often those who are most in need also have much to contribute, let us pray to the Lord.

*Lord, have mercy.*

# WORSHIP RESOURCES

## Prayers of the People

### Adapted from the Prayers of the People in The Book of Common Prayer

#### *Additions to Form II*

*Add one or more of the following:*

I ask your prayers for those who are attacked in this and every country because of their true gender as it has been revealed to them.

*Silence*

I ask your prayers for those who are attacked in this and every country because of who they love.

*Silence*

I ask that family members and loved ones of those who are attacked because of their sexual orientation or gender identity may be comforted and strengthened in their resolve for justice.

*Silence*

I ask for your strength and comfort for children who suffer prejudice from their parents.

*Silence*

I ask your prayers for members of this congregation to discern whether we are called to reach out to LGBTQ+ people who are searching for safety, and the strength to follow that call.

*Silence*

I ask your prayers for members of this congregation to have the open-heartedness, confidence, and humility that we must have if we are to welcome newcomers as you are calling us to do.

*Silence*

I ask your prayers for members of this congregation to have the ability to see that often those who are most in need also have much to contribute.

*Silence*

# WORSHIP RESOURCES

## Prayers of the People

### Adapted from the Prayers of the People in The Book of Common Prayer

#### *Additions to Form III*

*Add one or more of the following:*

We pray that you will grant courage, safety, and healing to those who are attacked in this and every country because of their true gender as it has been revealed to them;  
*That they may be delivered from their distress.*

We pray that you will grant courage, safety, and healing to those who are attacked in this and every country because of who they love;  
*That they may be delivered from their distress.*

We pray that children who suffer prejudice from their parents be granted your comfort and strength;  
*That they may be delivered from their distress.*

We pray that the family members and loved ones of those who are attacked because of their sexual orientation or gender identity may be comforted and strengthened in their resolve for justice;  
*That there may be justice and peace on the earth.*

Grant us the wisdom to discern whether we are called to reach out to LGBTQ+ people who are searching for safety; and if we are the ones you call, give us strength and perseverance to follow your will;  
*That there may be justice and peace on the earth.*

Grant us the open-heartedness, confidence, and humility that we must have if we are to welcome newcomers as you are calling us to do;  
*That our works may find favor in your sight.*

For the ability to see that often those who are most in need also have much to contribute;  
*That our works may find favor in your sight.*

# WORSHIP RESOURCES

## Prayers of the People

### Adapted from the Prayers of the People in The Book of Common Prayer

#### *Additions to Form IV*

*Add one or more of the following:*

Grant courage, safety, and healing to those who are attacked in this and every country because of their true gender as it has been revealed to them.

*Silence*

Lord, in your mercy  
*Hear our prayer.*

Grant courage, safety, and healing to those who are attacked in this and every country because of who they love.

*Silence*

Lord, in your mercy  
*Hear our prayer.*

Grant that the family members and loved ones of those who are attacked because of their sexual orientation or gender identity may be comforted and strengthened in their resolve for justice.

*Silence*

Lord, in your mercy  
*Hear our prayer.*

Grant your comfort and strength to children who suffer prejudice from their parents.

*Silence*

Lord, in your mercy  
*Hear our prayer.*



# WORSHIP RESOURCES

## Prayers of the People

### Adapted from the Prayers of the People in The Book of Common Prayer

#### *Additions to Form IV*

*Continued:*

Grant us the wisdom to discern whether we are called to reach out to LGBTQ+ people who are searching for safety; and if we are the ones you call, give us strength and perseverance to follow your will.

*Silence*

Lord, in your mercy  
*Hear our prayer.*

Grant us the open-heartedness, confidence, and humility that we must have if we are to welcome newcomers as you are calling us to do.

*Silence*

Lord, in your mercy  
*Hear our prayer.*

Grant us the ability to see that often those who are most in need also have much to contribute.

*Silence*

Lord, in your mercy  
*Hear our prayer.*

# WORSHIP RESOURCES

## Prayers of the People

### **Adapted from the Prayers of the People in The Book of Common Prayer**

#### *Additions to Form V*

*Add one or more of the following:*

For the courage, safety, and healing of those who are attacked in this and every country because of their true gender as it has been revealed to them, we pray to you, O Lord.

For the courage, safety, and healing of those who are attacked in this and every country because of who they love, we pray to you, O Lord.

For the comfort and strength of those who see their family members and loved ones attacked because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, we pray to you, O Lord.

For strength and comfort among children who suffer prejudice from their parents, we pray to you, O Lord.

For the wisdom to discern whether we are called to reach out to LGBTQ+ people who are searching for safety, and the strength to follow your call, we pray to you, O Lord.

For the open-heartedness, confidence, and humility that we must have if we are to welcome newcomers as you are calling us to do, we pray to you, O Lord.

For the ability to see that often those who are most in need also have much to contribute, we pray to you, O Lord.

# WORSHIP RESOURCES

## Prayers of the People

### **Adapted from the Prayers of the People in The Book of Common Prayer**

#### *Additions to Form VI*

*Add one or more of the following:*

For all people who are persecuted and flee in search of safety;  
*For those who are attacked, shunned, and in need because of their gender identity or sexual orientation, wherever they might be.*

For the family members and friends of those who are persecuted;  
*For all who suffer when they see their loved ones suffer.*

For the children who suffer from the prejudice of their parents;  
*For those whose families reject them because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.*

For this community, the nation, and the world;  
*For those who hear a call to help LGBTQ+ people in distress.*

For this community, the nation, and the world;  
*For the open-heartedness, confidence, and humility that we must have if we are to welcome newcomers as you are calling us to do.*

For this community, the nation, and the world;  
*For the ability to see that often those who are most in need also have much to contribute.*

# WORSHIP RESOURCES

## Prayers of the People

Composed by The Benedictine Way, Omaha, Nebraska

Jesus our Savior, you taught us that wherever two or three are gathered in your name, you are present among them. Be present to us Jesus, please hear our prayers as we cry out to you for justice for our LGBTQ siblings.

We pray for your people: especially for our LGBTQ siblings who are in danger anywhere in the world. Please keep our siblings safe and help them to freedom.

*God, hear our prayer.*

We pray for your people: especially for our LGBTQ siblings who are seeking asylum in the United States. Help them to see their way to safety.

*God, hear our prayer.*

We pray for your people: especially those in the American government who have an influence on immigration law, policy, and implementation. Help them to understand the plight of many LGBTQ persons and the need for asylum.

*God, hear our prayer.*

We pray for your people: especially our LGBTQ siblings who are poor, hungry, and homeless because they are denied work or basic human rights. Teach us to feed and shelter one another.

*God, hear our prayer.*

We pray for your people: especially our LGBTQ siblings who are imprisoned, tortured, or condemned to die. Teach us to liberate one another.

*God, hear our prayer.*

We pray for your people: especially those anywhere in the world, who make or enforce laws that persecute our LGBTQ siblings, that they will repent their ways, change oppressive laws, free all those imprisoned, and accept our siblings as equal citizens with the full protection of the law, of society, and of religious organizations.

*God, hear our prayer.*

O God, accept the fervent prayers of your people; in the multitude of your mercies, look with compassion upon us and all who turn to you for help; for you are gracious, O Lover of souls; and to you we give glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and forever.

*Amen.*

# **WITNESS**

# WITNESS

EMM offers materials for individuals and groups to use as part of their public witness to support LGBTQ+ people and forced migrants.

## LOGOS

EMM offers a variety of materials for individuals and groups to use as part of their public witness to support LGBTQ+ people and forced migrants.

[LINK](#)

THE RAINBOW  
INITIATIVE



## MESSAGES

The Episcopal Church Welcomes LGBTQ+ Immigrants  
Refugee + LGBTQ+ = Child of God  
My Church Loves LGBTQ+ Refugees  
We Welcome LGBTQ+ Asylum Seekers  
God Loves LGBTQ+ Refugees  
Jesus Loves LGBTQ+ Asylum Seekers



## CANVA DESIGN FILES

- Stickers: [LINK](#)
- Posters: 8.5" x 11" [LINK](#) (") | 18" x 24" [LINK](#)
- Banners: [LINK](#)



**SERVE**

# SERVE

There are many opportunities for you to serve in support of LGBTQ+ refugees and forced migrants.

## **Welcome and Sponsor:**

Learn more about ways that you and your community can come together to sponsor a refugee, asylum seeker, or other displaced person through EMM's Ways to Welcome: [episcopalmigrationministries.org/waystowelcome/](https://episcopalmigrationministries.org/waystowelcome/).

## **Volunteer**

Volunteer: [InReach](#) is a trans-led tech nonprofit increasing resource access for the diverse LGBTQ+ community. The [free InReach App](#) is the world's first tech platform matching LGBTQ+ people facing persecution or discrimination with safe, verified resources. InReach aims to serve as a digital one-stop-shop for the diverse LGBTQ+ community. InReach has verified services for LGBTQ+ asylum seekers, refugees and other immigrants, LGBTQ+ Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, the transgender and gender nonconforming (TGNC) community, LGBTQ+ youth and their caregivers, and more LGBTQ+ communities. There are many volunteer opportunities at InReach:

- [Local Community Reviewer \(LCR\) Volunteer](#)
- [Volunteer Translation Proofreader Volunteer](#)
- [Young Professionals Board Program](#) (open to young professionals ages 21-40 living anywhere in North America)
- Additional volunteer opportunities can be found on InReach's ['Join Our Team' page](#).

## **Advocate:**

Use your voice to advocate for those forced to flee their homelands in search of safety. Join the Episcopal Public Policy Network to respond to action alerts and share your thoughts with your members of Congress and the administration: [episcopalchurch.org/ogr](https://episcopalchurch.org/ogr).

For more volunteer and advocacy opportunities, click on the "Serve" tab on the [Rainbow Initiative webpages](#).